

ROTBTD: oneshots and short stories,
by kreite

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ROTBTD: oneshots and short stories,

In all his centuries of life Jack couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this helpless.

He was slumped on top of a carved wooden chair whilst his staff rested dejectedly against the bed stand. He and Merida were sat and pacing respectively waiting sedately for Rapunzel to burst into the room and sing them all out of another nightmare.

Hiccup's sallow face was a pale, expressionless mask; his greying head was much too small against the fat, blank pillows and his cheeks were gaunt and bruised to the point where he barely looked alive.

Some would argue that Merida was keeping herself together surprisingly well, disguising her grief behind her anger as she wore a path into the polished floorboards.

"I swear when I get my hands on that black hearted scum I'll wring his skinny neck for this!"

Jack didn't have the heart to say anything to her; his eyes were fixed on Hiccup's as though he could will the boy awake.

"He'll rue the day he was bloody born!" Merida promised to the ice curling on the windowpanes.

Jack might have winced at the way her strained voice caught in her throat and made her sound like she was choking at the end.

There was a terse of silence where he felt something bitter and alien

claw its way through his chest and shake his shoulders.

"Jackâ€|?" Merida whispered, in a tone similar to the one she used to calm her horse. He jumped slightly when she put her hand on his shoulder. "Are you alrightâ€|?"

He looked up to her and she reciprocated his expression with an angrily set jaw and finely pursed lips.

He desperately wanted to prove to her that he was dealing with it, keep from facing the ache that was tying his stomach into knots and making his hands grip into his cape until they hurt but it only took a single gesture from those horrified, broken, beautiful eyes to pull a pained sound from his throat. He bit down on it but there was no way he could hide the uncomfortably hot tears that smarted beside his nose and fell down his cheeks. He shook his head at her and she moved close to place an arm around him as he did his best to hold back from breaking down completely.

"He'll be okay" Merida chanted into his ear with all the conviction she could manage but even through the pounding and sniffling in his ears Jack could tell she was barely a step away from joining him; it was probably his sorry state that was keeping her composed: she had too much pride to cry when a friend of hers was in need.

"I-I should've- I should've known he'd try to- a-afterâ€|" Jack felt like he was about to be sick with the way his heart was constricting in the back of his throat "When he was yelling at us like that I just thought he needed some time to himself I thou-" the whine on his tongue pulled his voice away and prompted Merida to tighten her hold.

He sighed, long and ragged, "I shouldn't have doubted him, Mer', " by that point he couldn't have sounded sadder or weaker if he'd tried.

Merida's voice was firm but no less placating. "It's not your fault, you couldn't have known he'd do this, none of us could have known"

It took more than a few seconds before Jack was able to push his sobbing down to a manageable level, then his sore throat adjusted his voice into something like a whisper.

"That doesn't make me feel any better." Merida didn't respond as Jack turned back to Hiccup. "I mean what was he even thinking, going after Pitch on his own?"

Merida let go of him and faced away to the farthest wall, for a moment she quietly held council with it.

"He thought we'd lost you"

Jack felt the knife in his chest twist.

"After you fell, he and toothless just sort of hung there and Pitchâ€| said something to him, something I reckon only he could hear"

"You're saying Pitch used me to goad him into a fight?" Jack's voice

was slowly getting clearer, enough that he himself could hear the dry gravel in the back of his own throat.

"â€|Aye, I kin' so"

He spared Hiccup another watery glance.

"After we brought you back, before you woke up, he was worrying about you something fierce; I didn't catch all of it but he did nay sound too pleased with himself"

Jack huffed and aggressively raked his fingers through his hair, figures the boy would blame himself. "Did you talk to him?"

"Not before Tooth told us you were awake. I mean, after Rapunzel saved you, wellâ€| you saw how relieved he was, how relieved we all were, and then when you brushed the whole thing off as 'no big deal' I think you scared him"

" 'Scared him?'"

Merida stopped dead before she suddenly rounded on him "Aye, you idiot! That boy loves you to bits; he and Rapunzel were crying themselves sick when they thought you might not make it!" Merida paused for a moment to collect herself, showing more of her mother than she'd probably care to admit before her voice became deadly quiet and Jack suddenly got the distinct impression that he might have underestimated how much she'd been affected by the whole thing. "â€|and then you just pop right up as if nothing's happened and say right to his face that you don't consider yourself nearly dying as something to fret so much over!"

Jack was speechless but Merida wasn't done.

"â€|If you'd seen the look in their eyes when you said thatâ€| Rapunzel was trying so hard not to scream at you because you were alive and she was happy and didn't want to sound 'rude'" she scoffed "You jumped at the boogieman, nearly got yourself killed and you're asking Hiccup why he just tried to go after Pitch himself?!"

"Iâ€|"

"It's because he thinksâ€| that you're gonna die the next time we face him, that you'll throw yourself at Pitch like nothing matters again only this time Rapunzel won't be close enough or toothless won't be fast enough or I'llâ€|" Merida's frown increased and for a second she barely held on to her posture. "I wasn't expecting this either, no matter what I tell myself I still feel like I should have known he'd try to play hero and get himself hurtâ€| like youâ€| you're both stupid like that"

"Merida!" Jack jumped in before she could continue. He floundered at first; his mouth moving, mitigating the incoherent noises coming out of his throat "I... I'm sorry, I didn't knowâ€|!" that had apparently been the wrong thing to say because she was hotly glaring at him now with red puffy cheeks and leaky eyes.

"Aye, you didn'tâ€| like I saidâ€| no one did" she didn't seem to be talking to him anymore, her eyes drifted fearfully over to Hiccup

still pallid and comatose.

They might have said more if not for the door tentatively groaning open. A stray strand of long golden hair poked through "Uh-oh guys?"

Rapunzel wore a very nervous smile; her dress was torn up to her kneecaps and her cheeks were flushed with some effort.

"Hey, Punzie!" Jack was quiet again, as was the rest of the room.

"How is he?" her whispers were laden with heartfelt concern.

"Could be better or could be worse" replied Merida in a kindly whisper.

Rapunzel smiled at the two of them sadly, sympathetically, and moved something like a shrug. She'd more than likely heard Merida chew him out.

The princess shuffled ambivalently. "How are you, lass?"

"Fine, fine. How is he doing?" her eyebrows creased at the sight of Hiccup's off colour cheeks.

"No change I'm afraid"

"Tell me you can do something" Merida levelled a deep glower at Jack who flinched ruefully.

Rapunzel gave Merida a painfully unknowing look before softly making her way over to the side of the bed and cautiously drawing the covers off their friend, Hiccup remained unresponsive.

She kneeled down and laid a helping of her hair over his chest, which upon inspection was affixed with a dark, sickly ichor that spread outwards under his skin from his heart in tiny black veins, from the place where Pitch's arrow had pierced through.

She closed her eyes, stilled her breath and sang!

The first thing Hiccup felt when he woke up was a pair of shivering, slender arms wrapping around his sore neck.

His first breath snagged on something sharp, wracking him with convulsion until he hacked up several chunks of gritty slime, staining the bed sheets black and leaving him feeling like he'd just emptied his guts.

"Hey" he managed to rasp through a meagre belch.

Rapunzel drew back from him with a drastic gasp, her tearful, open smile lit up the entire room even as she covered her mouth to keep herself from crying out.

Hiccup sat up with her hand gently bracing his shoulder and lazily wiped the gunky taste out of his mouth with a tattered sleeve; his eyes were bleary and weighted as he surveyed what looked like one of North's innumerable spare rooms: fir wood walls, warmly waxed

floorboards, a pale, homely light letting in through the window. All things considered it was by no means an unpleasant place to wake up in.

Merida raggedly smiled at him with an expression of unadulterated relief, she looked like she was trying to decide on whether to kill him or scream at him before she proceeded to tackle him into a hug that was much harder than Rapunzel's, stifling sniffles into his shoulder; Jack's smirk was weary and Hiccup couldn't help but feel uncomfortable at the sight of his exhaustedly reddened eyes.

"You okay?" Jack said it in an exhalation that sounded like he'd been holding it in for too long.

"Yeahâ€| I'm okay" Hiccup tried his best to sound breezy but instead ended up sounding aggressively spent.

Merida pulled back and Hiccup felt something twist inside of him at the sight of the tears welling up in her eyes; she kept smiling even as her good-natured chuckling became worryingly disjointed.

"Hey, hey it's alrightâ€| "

Merida raised a hand to cover her temples.

Jack's eyebrow rose. "Do you remember what happened?"

Hiccup gave him a vague shrug and he replied with an incredulous curl of his lips.

"I remember me and toothless going after Pitchâ€| that's about it" His eyes widened "Is toothless okay?!"

"Toothless is fine, Hic, don't worry, Pitch missed him" Hiccup sagged back into his pillows and Rapunzel sighed comically, diffusing some of the tension in the room. "Well, you're okay now, that's what matters." Her smile had lessened but it was still affectionate enough to chase away some of the burning in his chest.

"Hiccupâ€| I'm sorry"

"For what?"

He wrinkled his nose at Jack who brushed a quavering hand through his hair and tried to find something else in the room to focus on.

"For going after Pitch before, for letting him say those things to youâ€| for making you worryâ€| " he trailed off, suddenly looking haggard and drained. "For scaring you like I did"

Hiccup pushed out a forgiving smile.

"It's okay, I promise not to do it again if you do"

"I promise" he replied all too quickly.

"Good" Hiccup was feeling rather serious again, and looking it too if the enervated hint on Jack's face was anything to go by.

Merida crossed her arms, regarding the two of them coolly but

approvingly while Rapunzel let her shoulders go of a stiffness.

"Next time, if someone's going to do something stupid they'd better warn the rest of us first, we're a team, if we get into trouble we do it together"

Unanimous agreement, Hiccup chuckled and Rapunzel reached out to briefly hold Merida's hand.

There was a break into comfortable collective silence.

"Why'd you do it?" Rapunzel's voice was clipped and over infused a minute later.

Hiccup already knew exactly what they thought of him risking his life and it caused a feeling not unlike the already present bundle of nausea to well up in his vacant stomach.

"I'm sorry, I just didn't want Pitch toâ€|" He suddenly felt deeply distraught but he couldn't seem to cry. "He said that we were kidding ourselves if we thought we could beat him, he called me every name the others didâ€|" he cut himself off but he knew that they all knew who 'the others' referred to.

"He told me you were dead, said it was my faultâ€|" Hiccup's vision started to swim. "And he was rightâ€| it was, I should've, I should've, done something, I should've been better and I'm sorry, I'm sorreee-he-heeeâ€|" Even his harsh sobbing was dry when he finally broke down as three pairs of arms tenderly embraced him.

"It wasn't your faultâ€| I'm sorry too." Rapunzel was almost crying as hard as he was.

"It wasn't anybody's fault" Merida was stoic and Hiccup clung to her resolve.

"The only one to blame here is Pitch" Jack sounded uncharacteristically angry.

"I justâ€| I justâ€|"

"You just want us to be safe"

A sniffle.

An emphatic nod.

"You guys are all I've got left!"

They squeezed harder and rode his weeping into the afternoon.

Afterwards Rapunzel was pushed to find the time to properly repair her dress, Jack made to make sure the yetis would double security around the pole whilst Merida stood guard outside Hiccup's doorframe until they all came back to visit him.

He told them about the nightmares he'd had while asleep and apologised again without sobbing.

They all spent the waning evening telling each other stories.

Rapunzel had sleeping bags brought in, despite Hiccup's modest protests.

End
file.